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MULTIPLE ARRESTS IN EUROPE HIGHLIGHT COMPLEX THREAT OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | Sunday, December 24, 2023[Share on X](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Media at CEP](#)media@counterextremism.com**(New York, N.Y.)** — [On December 23rd](#), Austrian and

German authorities arrested several individuals linked to

Islamist terrorist cells that had planned to use explosive

devices to attack Christmas services in Cologne, Germany,

Vienna, Austria, and Madrid, Spain. Following the arrests,

security measures have been increased at church services across all three countries. Initial [media](#)[reports](#) indicate that the arrested cells in Austria and Germany were linked to the [Islamic State Khorasan](#)[Province \(ISKP\)](#), the ISIS affiliate in those countries.[+ Contact Us](#)

Counter Extremism Project (CEP) Chief Executive Officer Ambassador Mark D. Wallace stated:

These arrests demonstrate once again that ISIS remains a serious threat to the West. ISIS is not only trying to take advantage of Hamas's war against Israel to motivate its supporters and sympathizers, but is also attempting to organize terror attacks in Europe in order to demonstrate its continued relevance within the terrorist milieu. Authorities must continue to increase their cooperation to ensure the futility of these efforts.

CEP Senior Director Dr. Hans-Jakob Schindler stated:

Afghanistan remains a very active terrorist zone. The Taliban regime is not only extremely repressive domestically, violating all basic human rights including women's rights, but also maintain their symbiotic relationship with al-Qaida and its various affiliates in the country. In addition, the Taliban are not a reliable partner in the fight against ISIS in Afghanistan. Therefore, rather than further relaxing the control mechanisms that are deployed to ensure that humanitarian deliveries are not diverted to terrorist groups

mechanisms that are deployed to ensure that humanitarian aid is not diverted to terrorist groups in Afghanistan, as some propose, strict monitoring structures continue to be necessary to ensure that finances flowing into Afghanistan are not diverted. Ignoring the situation in Afghanistan will only come at our collective peril.

This is the third time since 2020 that ISKP attempted to attack targets in Europe. [In April 2020](#), a cell of Tajik nationals was arrested in Germany for attempting to attack US military installations in the country. In [July 2023](#), German and Dutch authorities arrested another group of individuals from Central Asia, also linked to ISKP and planning terror attacks. Finally, in November 2023, German authorities arrested two individuals who were planning to bomb a Christmas market in the country before fleeing to Afghanistan and joining ISKP.

In parallel to the counter terrorism operations in Austria and Germany, on Friday [French authorities](#) also arrested a cell of five individuals who were planning an Islamist terrorist attack in December 2023. It is currently unclear whether the French cell was linked to the arrested individuals in Austria and Germany. Following the arrests, France increased its terrorism threat level.

To read CEP's study on the continuing security risks emanating from Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, click [here](#).

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In Their Own Words:

We reiterate once again that the brigades will directly target US bases across the region in case the US enemy commits a folly and decides to strike our resistance fighters and their camps [in Iraq].

- Abu Ali al-Askari, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) Security Official
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